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Development of the Rockyford Cantaloupe Industry.

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Development of the Rockyford Cantaloupe Industry.

PHILO K. BLINN.

EARLY HISTORY.

Rockyford Netted Gem Cantaloupes have been produced in the vicinity of Rockyford for about twenty years, while other varieties of cantaloupes or muskmelons are reported as having been grown at an earlier period by the first settlers along the valley.

The honor of growing the first Rockyford cantaloupes for market is accredited to Mr. J. W. Eastwood now a resident of Phoenix, Ariz. The same season Mr. J. E. Gauger, a few miles west of La Junta also grew a small patch of the Netted Gems from seed secured from Mr. W. Atlee Burpee who introduced the variety in 1881.

Mr. Eastwood relates the beginning of the industry in the following narrative:

I removed from Denver to Rockyford in November, 1884, and as I had previously been growing the Netted Gem cantaloupes, I determined to try them there. Accordingly the following spring, I planted about one-half acre, and so far as I know, this was the first of this variety grown at Rockyford. Mr. G. W. Swink was growing a larger variety, but after making several close inspections of the Netted Gems as he saw them growing during the season, said he was convinced that they were the cantaloupes to grow.

He selected a dozen or so for seed which were the first of this variety in Rockyford to be saved for seed. I secured my seed either through Mr. Henry Lee of Denver or Mr. Burpee of Philadelphia.

At that time no thought was given to the improvement of the parent stock, from which such marked results have since been attained.

I do not now remember the amount of cash received from the product of this half acre. I shipped the melons mostly to Mr. Woodruff, a commission merchant of Leadville, who sold them for 10 cents per pound, which would be equal to about \$6.50 per crate.

As the patch yielded well and the melons sold so readily, I wished before the season closed that I had planted several half acres, but during the seven years in which I grew cantaloupes at Rockyford, I rarely exceeded five acres each year. After the first two or three years a number of other farmers began growing cantaloupes.

In those early years the market was not crowded and by culling closely a good sale was realized for what was shipped. The cantaloupes were gathered in sacks and packed and shipped in barrels and boxes, and as the market was then principally in Colorado towns, the "empties" were returned to the growers. We had not thought of shipping in car lots, although watermelons were already being shipped in that way; sometimes straw was placed, on top of the water melons and cantaloupes were added to the car.

We had no thought of co-operative organization as yet, but each suc-

ceeding year, new growers were added, and as the markets began to be more fully supplied with cantaloupes, they were sometimes over crowded at the height of the season; one year while I was there, the growers met and apportioned the markets, each grower agreeing to ship only to his own, during the rush of the season, thus equalizing the supply to the various markets.

At the commencement of the cantaloupe industry, a comparatively small area was under cultivation. Such farms as were found along the Arkansas were principally stock ranches, producing hay, grain and alfalfa seed. The gross returns from any of these crops were comparatively small, and the valuation of land was consequently low. In the vicinity of Rockyford, even as late as 1897, choice lands under ditches with the best water rights were purchased for fifty dollars per acre. Hon. G. W. Swink and other early settlers who were interested in the development of the valley, were enterprising in their efforts. In 1889 Mr. Swink attended a Beet Sugar Convention held at Grand Island, Neb., with a view of interesting the Oxnard's in the Arkansas Valley as a suitable location for a Beet Sugar factory. He became convinced that the farms in the Arkansas Valley were too large and the population too small to offer any inducement to the sugar beet industry at that time. He had the hope, however, that the cantaloupe industry, which had already brought encouraging returns, would provide a larger population and smaller farms, and thus bring about the conditions necessary for the beet industry. Accordingly on his return to Rockyford he set to work to encourage every available settler. His lands near Rockyford were divided into five and ten acre tracts; and opportunities to secure homes were freely offered to health seekers without means, good intention being the principle requirement. The lucrative promise of the cantaloupe industry, as well as the light character of the work, appealed to an intelligent class of people who found the climatic conditions of the East too severe.

The public spirit which was early manifested, as well as the enterprising character of the community, were potent factors in the development of the cantaloupe industry and led to the intensive farming which has since characterized the vicinity of Rockyford.

During ten or twelve years, small farms devoted to cantaloupe culture were constantly increasing. Some growers, fortunate in getting early melons and in shipping to reliable commission merchants, received gratifying returns; others from various causes received but poor returns and bewailed their fate in ever coming to the valley.

During the latter part of the first decade, it became evident that the production of cantaloupes had reached the limit of the

market then developed. One of the first evidences of "too many" cantaloupes, was the lack of boxes and barrels for shipping. Necessity, however, became the mother of invention, and someone conceived the idea of making a crude crate. Twelve-inch board and common lath were utilized, half of the length of the lath being used for slats, and as this happened to accommodate about 45 averaged sized melons, the size of the future standard crate was thus arbitrarily determined. Although the empty boxes were constantly being returned from the Pueblo and Denver markets, the local supply of lath and twelve-inch boards was soon exhausted.

Glowing reports from the first shipments of the season created such enthusiasm, that every melon which could possibly be shipped was hurried onto the market, only to find at the end of the season, that much of the crop had not paid express charges. The high prices which a favored few obtained at the beginning of the season acted like a lucky strike in a mining camp, and each spring found new growers and a constantly increasing acreage.

For many years the cantaloupes were shipped entirely by local express, each grower making his individual consignments to the various Colorado markets. In 1894 the first step toward co-operative effort in marketing cantaloupes was taken, groups of neighbors combining to load a ventilator car and ship by freight, thus securing greatly reduced transportation. The cars were consigned to commission men on the various markets who remitted to the individual consignors who made up the car. Messrs. G. W. Swink, A. C. Comer, A. P. Kouns were representative men in these early shipping groups. Two years later the growers, for the first time, were supplied with regular crates manufactured at the lumber mills. These were of the same dimensions as the first crude crate, and were essentially the same as those that have since been used.

Following the introduction of the crate, came the next step towards co-operative organization, when one of the shipping groups, already referred to, added a few members, elected officers, and effected a formal organization which has since been known as the "Kouns Party." Their plan was to ship to specially authorized agents or commission men who contracted to handle their cantaloupes exclusively. They shipped most of their cantaloupes to Denver, receiving fair returns considering the glutted condition of the Colorado markets that season. Their organization had its advantages, but as they had no control over the heavy shipments of others, the general results of 1896 were a repetition of former failures. Many growers after laboring all summer to produce a crop of cantaloupes, were presented with bills for transportation, their summer's labor having been sacrificed as they believed, to the

railroad and commission men. A few cars of cantaloupes which Messrs. G. W. Swink and A. C. Comer that season shipped to Kansas City and St. Louis caused a new star of hope to rise in the Eastern horizon, and visions of great possibilities for future market developments.

The unremunerative returns of several years having created a strong public sentiment that something must be done, the time seemed to be ripe for a more comprehensive co-operative organization. Accordingly a meeting was called in the fall of 1896; by-laws were drafted and articles of incorporation were filed for the Rockyford Melon Growers Association. It embraced practically all the cantaloupe growers of Otero county with the exception of several individuals who by reason of the organization were able to secure good prices from certain commission men who were trying hard to disrupt the organization. The Kouns Party was absorbed by the Association, it being understood that H. Woods should represent the Association in the Denver market. The general plan of the Association was to market all cantaloupes possible, and when from lack of cars or insufficient market, the melons could not be handled, the grower was given a receipt and his cantaloupes returned to him to be cut for seed or to be fed to stock. The proceeds of those which were marketed were divided pro rata according to the receipts which the growers held.

The first season a contract was made with the Western Poultry and Game Co. of St. Louis, Mo., which agreed to take thirty-five cars during the season of 1897 at 75 cents per crate, f. o. b. at Rockyford. The quality of the cantaloupes that season was exceptionally fine, and they sold so readily on the Eastern markets, that by the close of the season the St. Louis firm had handled 121 cars. On several occasions, circumstances necessitated the return of the cantaloupes to the grower, which, according to the terms of the Association were receipted for, and which reduced the average price per crate during the season, yet for once in the history of the cantaloupe industry, the returns were satisfactory.

The following year the Manager of the Western Poultry and Game Co. came before the Association and reported that the previous year had been a profitable one to his company, they having cleared a considerable sum, exclusive of large amounts spent in advertising; he claimed that they had secured reliable agents in New York, Pittsburg and other cities in the East, to assist them, and offered to contract the crop of 1898 at 97½ cents per crate, f. o. b. at Rockyford. The proposition was received with enthusiasm.

The membership of the Association swelled to over 800 members, and the acreage increased to more than 5,000 acres in Otero

County. With the exception of a small body of men in Prowers County and two or three men in Otero County it comprised all the cantaloupe growers in the Arkansas Valley. Never before was there a closer organization of growers, or one in which members were more persistent in their determination to remain loyal to the organization.

Some attempts were made to influence growers to break the contract and leave the organization, some men even having their agents meet the growers on the road to the station, and offer an advance over what they expected to receive through the Association, but as there was a general feeling that they had been victimized by such men there is no record of any grower betraying the Association.

The harvest began early in August, a few crates at first which rapidly increased until 14 cars were loaded in a day. This jumped suddenly to 28 cars a day during the last week in August. Soon 150 cars were rolling to the Eastern markets when it was realized that the market would be glutted before the week's heavy shipment could arrive. Telegrams flashed the information and a halt was called, while the commission men hurried West to explain the situation. A largely attended mass meeting of growers met at the Fair Grounds in Rockyford to hear the report of market conditions. By telegrams, letters and able addresses, they were convinced that their cantaloupes were not so marketable as in the previous year. Over one hundred cars had been dumped in New York City alone and transportation charges of many thousands of dollars remained unpaid, which it was claimed they were responsible for because the melons were not merchantable.

The A. T. & S. F. R. R. offered to cancel the transportation due them from the lost cantaloupes. The commission firm offered to pay \$18,000 of the \$48,000 then due the Association, providing the latter would waive the balance and accept 75 cents per crate for the balance of the season. This proposition was accepted by the growers though it afterwards proved that the firm was unable to meet their promises and representatives of the Association were sent East to investigate the disaster. They reported and experience has since shown that poor refrigeration was the chief cause of the loss of the cantaloupes, the truth of the matter being that the industry had out grown the then poorly developed market facilities. Experience in handling the crop had not kept pace with the increased production.

As a whole the season's results were highly unsatisfactory. Seemingly the Association idea had received a death blow, yet the co-operation idea of the Association was not abandoned, it simply changed form. The various shipping points of La Junta,

Fowler and Manzanola withdrew and organized Associations of their own, then a Federation was perfected including these several Associations which provided a general marketing committee with representatives from each Association who were empowered to make the contracts with the commission men, thus uniform contracts were secured for the Valley.

By this time, the cantaloupe industry had been the cause of a large increase in population and the large farms had been broken up into smaller tracts. Then, too, in 1899 a large number of field tests of sugar beets by farmers demonstrated the possibilities in the Valley, and the following year saw the construction of a factory at Rockyford, thus realizing the early hopes of the original promoters of the Valley.

Many growers turned their attention to the new crop so that the tension of the cantaloupe situation was somewhat relieved, and cantaloupe growing has since become more profitable, the average price realized having gradually increased. It is true there have been seasons of high and low prices, influenced by various conditions which effect the marketing of any crop, such as over-production, quality, the abundance of substitute fruit, etc.

At Rockyford the original Association, with amended by-laws, was continued and is still a well organized body of growers. The growers who had been previously identified as the "Kouns Party," withdrew with others and reorganized, forming the "Kouns Party" of today. Their plan has been to ship exclusively on commission, each car being treated as an entirety and the returns prorated among the growers who shipped in the car. The plan has been popular with many growers and a number of Associations in the Valley have adopted it, shipping through the same commission firm—H. Woods of Chicago.

The Rockyford Association and those federated with it, since the disaster of 1898 have also resorted to the commission basis in general, shipping through the joint firms of Lyons and Coggins, the main difference being that in the Rockyford Association, the returns have been prorated, at first in daily pools and later in the season in weekly pools, instead of by the car as in the Kouns Party. The latter method although affording a quick account of sales, make the returns for each grower more subject to chance, since the particular car in which he ships may or may not encounter favorable conditions. Thus in this plan there may be a variation in the returns which different growers may receive who have shipped the same day but in different cars.

It might be well to state that up to the present time, there has been no classification as to quality there being but one grade of inspection. In the other plan, the returns for the day or week

being pooled, growers shipping at the same period will receive the same returns regardless of the conditions which their individual melons may encounter. Each plan has its advocates and on the whole both have given satisfactory results.

Since the division of the big Association of 1898, most of the cantaloupes have been marketed through the organizations and commission men above mentioned, yet from time to time, other commission men have made efforts to gain a foot-hold with the growers. Taking advantage of low market conditions, they would report high returns and in this way a number of growers have been drawn from the Associations. One after another of these firms has come and gone, each time leaving a sadder but more experienced set of growers.

The presence of these contending elements has in many cases hampered the results of the associations, causing unstable conditions. Thus, when the management insisted on the rules of the Association and the rigid inspection of cantaloupes necessary to the welfare of the industry, some over sensitive grower would "pull out" to the opposition who were ready and willing to receive his cantaloupes regardless of condition. A number of instances have occurred when loads of green or otherwise unmarketable cantaloupes have been refused at the Association platform, only to be immediately driven over to the car of some contending commission firm, where a large sum would be paid for the first load with promise of still greater returns subsequently if sent on commission. The result of trusting these promises, has shown them to be but a bait. Again the constant canvassing by these commission agents has tended to increase the acreage of cantaloupes, although experience has shown the industry to be overdone nearly every year.

Not only this, but the strife and competition have led to the shipping of green unmarketable melons in order to get the advertising which comes from shipping the first basket or crate of Rockyfords. Thus, in 1894, one of the new commission firms paid \$10 for a crate of green cantaloupes which were shipped a week before the first really ripe cantaloupes were ready to market.

This shipping of green stock stimulated the practice in all of the Associations among impatient or inexperienced growers and resulted injuriously to the reputation of the Rockyford cantaloupes and has been an outrage upon the people who bought the fruit. A cantaloupe which is not at a certain stage of ripeness when picked will never be fit to eat, but the inexperienced commission man reasons that because fruit such as lemons, bananas and tomatoes can be marketed quite green and still attain perfection, that the same can be done with cantaloupes. This is a fatal mistake—as well

try to market green peaches, strawberries or watermelons, which only shrivel down and are worthless.

Many lessons beside those mentioned have been learned in the last six or eight years, and they nearly all attest the merits of well organized co-operative efforts to secure results.

During the coming season of 1906, the organized Associations will doubtless market most of the cantaloupes from the Rockyford district, although the firm of Young & Mathis of New York, who are large growers themselves, and who ship for individuals to some extent, may be a possible exception.

The growers in general have realized to their sorrow that the old adage, "Competition is the life of trade," is a poor maxim when applied to the sale of cantaloupes on commission—the commission men fight and the growers pay the bill. This has become such a reality that it has produced a strong sentiment in the minds of many growers in favor of a cash proposition.

As a result in recent years a cash advance of varying amounts has been granted in many of the contracts with the commission men, but there are many conditions which can not be controlled, such as the acreage needed to supply the market demands; the preventing of outside growers from selling on commission and thus competing with the man who pays cash, all of which seem to preclude the possibility of getting a cash price which would equal that now realized through reliable commission.

If the element of competition on the market were eliminated by the complete co-operation of the growers, and if the acreage were not increased beyond that indicated by experience, the price of cantaloupes would doubtless become more uniform from year to year.

The added strength of the established Associations, caused by the return of many of the disaffected growers; the securing of a uniform strain of seed for the members of these Associations, and the improving of market facilities are all factors which seem to promise better days for the cantaloupe industry and the realization of the co-operative ideal where all the interests of the cantaloupe growers become mutual.

Having summarized the growth of the industry from the grower's standpoint, the history would seem to be incomplete without a review of the market developments as witnessed from the distributing man's point of view; for in order to make possible this great industry which returns to the grower several hundred thousands of dollars each year, joint efforts were required on the part of both growers and market men, and without this co-operative effort, the industry would still be in a chaotic condition.

Lyons Brothers Co. of New York and M. O. Coggins Co.

of Pittsburg which jointly have directly or indirectly handled the cantaloupes of the Rockyford Melon Growers' Association since the first car went to Eastern markets, and H. Woods of Chicago, who has marketed the cantaloupes of the Kouns Party since its organization, represent the principal distributing agents of cantaloupe growers' organizations in Colorado during the past ten years.

Each has kindly contributed an article embodying much useful information relative to the co-operative organizations and the marketing of cantaloupes.

Mr. M. O. Coggins of Pittsburg had prepared an article entitled, "The Cantaloupe—From a Luxury to a Necessity," which he read before the National League of Commission Merchants in Milwaukee, and this article with supplementary information was to have been contributed to this Bulletin, but before he had time to prepare it, his sudden death immediately following his return, occurred, and the information expected to have been obtained from him, is limited to the article referred to.

His unexpected death has caused a severe blow to the cantaloupe industry, for without doubt his influence, as much as that of any one man has made possible the present development of the industry. Being identified with it from the first, his experience and judgment are a loss which will be felt. It was through his personal influence that the first cars were shipped east of St. Louis. In 1897, after several interviews over the long distance telephone with Mr. Nat Wetzel of St. Louis, he induced him, by a guarantee of \$2 per crate, to forward a car of Rockyford cantaloupes, although it was doubtful whether cantaloupes could be carried farther east than St. Louis. Mr. Coggins lost 20 cents per crate but made good his guarantee, and the merits of the melons becoming known, he was able to realize a profit on subsequent shipments, and that season handled 8 cars of the first 30 received in St. Louis by the Western Poultry and Game Co.

THE CANTALOUPE, FROM A LUXURY TO A NECESSITY

M. O. COGGINS.

In the year 1870, it was an unusual thing to see a muskmelon on the market, but long in the eighties, they began planting in the Maryland Peninsula a variety known as the Anna Rundels and also some Jenny Linds.

These were placed on the market about the 10th of July, but shipments amounted to very little until about the 20th of July, continuing until the middle of August; these shipments gradually increased in quantity each year until the nineties, although the total receipts on the New York market would not amount to three cars a day at the height of the season and the prices ranged from \$2.50 to \$6.50 per basket.

Only a few of the fruit and vegetable men handled muskmelons and they supplied the hotels and restaurants. The high prices and limited supply made the cantaloupe a great luxury, too expensive for the average grocer to handle.

Beginning with the early nineties, there was a gradual increase in quantity as other sections of the country began shipping so that the season gradually began earlier until melons for the 4th of July market were no longer considered a novelty.

After the year 1897, when Rockyfords were placed on the different markets and the standard crate established, the Rockyford seed for planting came to be in great demand in the southern states.

In 1898, the first cars of southern cantaloupes grown from Rockyford seed were shipped from Hitchcock, Texas, and in the following year the first carloads from Florida arrived in New York on June 2; these were followed by shipments from Georgia, the Carolinas and other points farther north, keeping a steady supply on the market until the last shipments of the Colorado melons.

The effect of the use of the Rockyford seed and of the standard crate was to make the cantaloupe a standard article of trade so that regular quotations could be made.

Orders were received from cities and towns tributary to the large receiving points, causing a demand at small points as well as large ones. This demand has increased so enormously since 1897, that I thought possibly a few figures carefully estimated would be of interest.

In 1897 the amount consumed throughout the United States was not over 400 carloads, gradually increasing until during the past season of 1905, 6,920 carloads were used throughout the United States. The three largest markets the past year handled 1,460; 715 and 660 cars respectively. While the season for cantaloupes has changed from a period of less than two months to six months of carload business.

The past three seasons have opened up about May 12 with shipments from Florida, car lots having been received on the market as early as May 22. During the height of the season, New York alone has received as high as 35 cars in a day.

Prior to the introduction of the Rockyfords, the markets had no uniform style of package, shipments being received in baskets, barrels, strawberry crates and sometimes in dry goods boxes. There being no uniformity, quotations were impossible, but with the establishment of the standard crate containing a uniform number of cantaloupes, the cantaloupe became a standard article of fruit which can be quoted intelligently, the buyer knowing what he is to receive in size and number, since the Rockyford seed produces the same size and shape in all states and is the only shape of cantaloupes that the buyers will buy. This has made it possible for both individuals and companies to plant a very large acreage.

To give some idea of the seed industry, there was saved in the past season in the Rockyford district, from 90,000 to 100,000 pounds for distribution in the different melon growing sections of the country.

Before the advent of the Rockyfords, a ten-acre patch was considered a large venture for any one grower and it is now well known that in some states one grower may sometimes attempt as high as 150 acres.

Prior to the Rockyfords no muskmelons worth speaking of were raised south of the Maryland Peninsula in the East, and Indiana and Missouri in the West; at the present time there are grown in the state of Florida, about 4,000 acres; in Georgia, about 4,000 acres; in North and South Carolina, about 4,500 acres, to say nothing of the aggregate of small acreage in other states; the total for the United States during the past season being not less than 58,600 acres.

The supply from the beginning is continuous, the season in one state overlapping that in another so there is no time after the commencement of the melon season when the markets are not supplied. Thus the trade has an opportunity to handle and the consumer an opportunity to purchase, so the cantaloupe at the breakfast table is no longer considered a luxury but a necessity.

EARLY MARKET CONDITIONS OF CANTALOUPE ON THE NEW YORK MARKET.

LYON BROTHERS COMPANY.

Prior to 1897, the eastern markets were supplied with Anna Rundels, Jennie Linds and the Hackensack variety of muskmelon; these came to the New York market in packages of every description, there being no uniformity of package or any effort to establish one.

The melons were irregular in size, variety and quality; the flesh was generally thin, the seed cavity large, the flavor irregular.

The bulk of the receipts for the New York market came from Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey. Evidently there was no systematic organization of the growers as the shipments were spasmodic; at times the market was glutted, at other times deficient, and the irregular conditions which prevailed made it impossible to give a standard market quotation.

The melons were sold by men whose principle business was the selling of vegetables and the prices realized were according to their ideas rather than from any regular market quotation, which today gives the grower accurate information of the condition of the market.

HOW ROCKYFORDS CHANGED CONDITIONS.

In August, 1897, Rockyford cantaloupes, packed uniformly in crates containing 45 cantaloupes, were received on the New York market; the thick flesh, small seed cavity and delicious flavor, made a sensational reputation for the Rockyford cantaloupe as being the very finest ever placed on the New York market. These melons we received from the Rockyford Melon Growers' Association, and the form of crate which originated there, was soon adopted as the standard package for market quotations, and soon came into use throughout the melon growing sections of the United States.

The ready sale of the Rockyfords, the organization of the growers which insured the uniform crates, and the fact that the melons were grown under irrigation and about the same quality could be produced every year, were facts which convinced us that the Rockyford would become as standard an article of trade as a barrel of apples.

Accordingly, we determined to make cantaloupes one of our specialties, and for several years were the only house in New York handling the product. By thorough advertising the Rockyford cantaloupe became famous in all the Eastern states.

The introduction of the Rockyford cantaloupe prolonged the market season in New York City from about September 5 to the middle of October.

Experiments showing that the Rockyford seed would reproduce its superior qualities when grown in the South or East, led to extensive planting in the Southern states—700 acres being planted in these states in 1899. The melons from these states came on early in May, thus opening the market two months in advance of previous years. In 1905, the first crate was received from Florida on May 12, and the supply continued from the various states in succession until October 23, making a period of nearly six months.

The fact that the cantaloupe seed produced in Colorado under irrigation, will produce earlier melons and of a superior quality, than the same strain when grown in other states, has been verified each year, and thousands of pounds are annually sent to the Southern states and California from Colorado.

Owing to the development of this phase of the industry, it behooves the Colorado grower to use the utmost care in the selection and development of his seed, in order to maintain the trade of the United States which looks to him to supply a superior grade of seed.

Every community of growers should organize an association which would make rules enforcing the planting of a strain of cantaloupe seed

known to have the best line of selection. They should insist on uniform grading and packing and permit no inferior cantaloupes to be marketed or even cut for seed.

By such action a reputation can be secured and maintained which will greatly benefit the melon industry. On the other hand, carelessness on the part of a few, may work irreparable injury to the industry.

We wish to express our satisfaction in dealing with organized growers. It has been more satisfactory to the growers themselves as well as the trade, and the co-operative spirit that has been shown in some of the communities of the melon growing section in Colorado, is worthy of being emulated in other sections of the country.

Transportation under modern refrigeration has made possible the great melon industry. Melons will carry to the most distant markets if the proper conditions are provided. Usually the melons are warm when loaded, the temperature often being over a hundred degrees in the shade.

The car may stand six or eight hours before it is made up and even if it starts soon after being loaded, the enormous heat in 350-400 crates of melons is more than the ice in the bunkers can absorb; the hot, close air generates a ferment that results in the partial or complete loss of the melons. It is a fact that in cars of cantaloupes which heat or are spoiled, the injury is done in the first 24 hours.

Mr. L. M. Lyons, the President of our Company, has been studying the problem and has perfected a patent cooling process, which exhausts the hot air while the car is being loaded and waiting to start on its long journey, thus avoiding the formation of degenerating gases.

During the season of 1905, the process was used for the first time at Thermal, Cal.; the cars were three days in being loaded and the outside temperature during the day varied from 123-130 degrees in the shade, but arrived in New York in perfect condition and sold as high as \$2,500 gross, per car.

During the coming season, the process will be tested in Colorado and the Southern states.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROCKYFORD CANTALOUPE.

H. WOODS.

My experience with the Rockyford cantaloupe began in Denver, fifteen years ago when one wagon could have delivered the daily consignments and my yearly sales did not exceed \$500. Since that time I have witnessed the growth of the industry and its market developments until the present time when my cantaloupe business amounted to \$250,000 for the season of 1905.

A story of the early market conditions of the Rockyford cantaloupe would be a varied one, telling of irregular cantaloupes, in irregular packages, coming in irregular consignments to irregular commission men, who remitted irregular returns to irregular growers.

From the beginning of my experience in Denver, the market, at some period in nearly every season would be over-crowded with melons.

The melon is at best a very perishable article and may be in perfect condition today, but soft and undesirable tomorrow. When the market is over-supplied each subsequent consignment makes more difficult the sale of stock already on hand, consequently the price drops, and transportation charges may not be realized. This has been the cause of many of the discouraging remittances to growers.

The recollection of some of the critical experiences of the early melon market in Denver is far from pleasant. Often the commission houses were overstocked and yet in spite of repeated advices by mail and wire, the growers would continue their consignments, although there was little hope of even securing transportation charges.

The adoption of the standard crate and the co-operative idea of some of the growers, made possible the wider development of the cantaloupe market throughout the United States.

The subsequent organization of the growers to provide a satisfactory market for their cantaloupes was a wise step.

The season of 1898 was a disastrous one. The elements leading to this failure being, poor quality, a partial failure in refrigeration, over-production, and the fact that a large proportion of the men handling the cantaloupes in the East, had but little experience or knowledge of the product, and the proper method of handling on the market.

Believing my experience with the Rockyford cantaloupe in Colorado would be useful to myself and the industry, and the industry having now become national rather than local, in 1899, I contracted to handle on a commission basis the cantaloupes of the Kouns Party on the Eastern market.

I went to New York to thoroughly study the conditions in the East, and to discover what improvements could be made in the distribution and handling of the cantaloupes on the Eastern market, also the necessities for their proper transportation and refrigeration.

From my experience and observation that year, I decided that Chicago was the best point from which to distribute the product.

Chicago was not only one of the largest cities in the country, but it was on the only line of railroad running through the cantaloupe belt of Colorado, although as yet Chicago consumed but very few Rockyford cantaloupes.

Accordingly in 1900 I located in Chicago continuing my contract with the Kouns Party and other Associations in the Rockyford country.

My long experience in the business, enabled me to secure good responsible parties in all the leading cities of the country to handle these cantaloupes for me. In the Chicago office, I was in daily touch by wire with all these agents, also, with the conditions of the cars in transit. These were inspected at the Missouri River and again at Chicago and forwarded to the different markets according to their condition, only the firmest and best stock being allowed to continue on the long journey to the seaboard.

It has taken since 1899 to build up this system and secure agents who can always be relied on to give attention to the business at the proper time.

The average price paid to the grower gradually increased from 1899 to 1903, averaging about a dollar per crate for the period of five years. The increase in price had two results which led to the almost complete failure of 1904: 1st the profits to the grower during the period of prosperity led to more extensive planting, resulting in over-production; 2d, the profits to the distributors during the same period, led new men without a comprehensive knowledge to go into the field and contract as distributors; this increased competition, led to the placing of many inferior melons which otherwise would not have been shipped, thus further overcrowding the markets and lowering the price below the point of profitable production, and in the case of some firms at an actual loss to the grower.

The poor results of 1904 materially decreased the acreage for 1905 and caused a much larger proportion of the melons to be handled by experienced distributors, so that the results to the grower were again satisfactory, reaching the highest average paid the grower in the history of the melon industry in Colorado.

To sum up the situation: The successful distributor must thoroughly know the source of supply; understand the handling of the melons from the field to the car, also the loading and cooling of cars, the proper refrigeration, the conditions and requirements of the different markets, and must have capable and experienced agents to handle the melons in the different cities of the country.

These, together with the support of an organization of growers,

who are loyal to their own best interests as represented by the objects of their association, will assure the prosperity of the industry.

TRANSPORTATION.

During the last nine years, 5,999 cars of cantaloupes were shipped out of the Rockyford district, being an average of 666 cars per annum. In 1904 the largest number were shipped, 1,182 cars, and in 1897 the smallest number, 121 cars.

The transportation feature of the cantaloupe industry is perhaps the most important of any. In the early stages of the cantaloupe industry the largest cars in use measured from 32-34 feet in length, outside measurement. Today the predominating car is 40 feet, outside measurement, which allows 32 feet 5 inches inside length; 8 feet 2 inches width and 7 feet 3 inches in height.

The crates are loaded lengthwise and space allowed between each tier for the circulation of the cold air. A 40 foot car permits 24,000 pounds or 366 standard crates of 66 pounds each, to be loaded in tiers not exceeding three crates in height, except a few tiers near the ice box. The warm air necessary rises to the top of the car, and if the cars are loaded more than three tiers high, the top tier generally arrives at its destination in a worthless condition.

It has been the experience of all receivers during the past years that it is not best to load cars to exceed 24,00 pounds, or 364 crates.

The system of icing the cars in vogue at present is to ice the empty cars at La Junta during the night and send them on a special train about 6 o'clock in the morning to the Rockyford district and stations west, or by the east-bound freight to stations in the Las Animas district.

The initial icing requires about 9,000 pounds. After loading, the cars are returned to La Junta and re-iced with about 6,000 pounds of ice.

The melon train arrives at La Junta from stations in the Rockyford district about 9 p. m. After re-icing the cars they depart for the East on trains leaving La Junta about midnight. In the height of the season, the train is a complete melon train.

During the very warm weather when the temperature ranges to 90 degrees and upwards, the rear vents are left open until Dodge City is reached. This is for the purpose of permitting the gases and hot air to escape from the car. Cars re-iced at Dodge City take an average of about 4,000 pounds of ice. The next icing station is Newton, Kan., where about 5,000 pounds more of ice are required. Argentine follows, with 4,500 pounds.

The run from La Junta to Argentine is 36 hours. At La Junta, Newton and Argentine, the S. F. R. D. Co. and St. F. R. R. each have ice inspectors whose duty is to see that the cars are

properly iced in accordance with instructions. These require that the ice shall not be in chunks larger than 50 pounds and that the bunkers shall be filled to full capacity at each icing station. There is no salt used but the ice is properly packed into the bunkers.

Argentine is a diversion point for most of the receivers and each has a representative to inspect the condition of the cantaloupes as well as the ice in the bunkers. On the report of the inspectors at Argentine is determined the diversion to long or short-haul points. The run from Argentine to Chicago is 30 hours.

Cars are re-iced at Corwith, the outer yard of the S. F. R. R. at Chicago, and usually require from 2,500-3,000 pounds of ice.

Full record of the movement of all cars is kept by the S. F. R. R. Co., being received by wire from La Junta, Dodge City, Newton and Argentine. Diversions may be accomplished at any point from the line of the S. F. R. R. on very short notice, by reason of this accurate record. Some through cars for the Eastern markets do not pass through Chicago but are given to the I. I. & I. R. R. or some other outer belt line which delivers to the Eastern connections without passing through Chicago, but on account of the advantage of inspecting cars at Corwith, it has been deemed advisable in late years to have all cars pass through Chicago. The melon train usually arrives at Corwith between 5 and 6 p. m., leaving ample time to re-ice cars and make Eastern connections.

The Bohn patent refrigerator car is used by the S. F. R. R. Co. giving more satisfactory refrigeration than the old style for the reason that the ice tanks are not covered but separated by a grating only, thus allowing the cold to permeate the car, and in this manner the car receives the full advantage of the ice.

In former years, cantaloupe cars were not iced prior to loading and then re-iced immediately after loading. The custom was to ice cars at La Junta, send them down to loading stations and not re-ice until cars reached Argentine. By that time the ice in the bunkers was practically exhausted, the melons ruined, and all the ice which could be put in the bunkers could not restore the damage to the melons. The striking contrast of the present system of re-icing the cars immediately after loading and keeping the bunkers well filled to destination, uniformly brings the cars to destination in first class condition and claims for damages are reduced to the minimum.

The time consumed in transporting cars from Chicago to New York is about 60 hours, and from Chicago to Boston about 84 hours. When cantaloupes are in good condition when picked and are loaded properly, the cars well iced and transported without unnecessary delay, they should arrive even on the Atlantic seaboard, in practically as good condition as when shipped.